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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

14 August 1956

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 61-56 (Supplement - State Proposal)

SUBJECT: Future Handling of the Big Soviet NIE

The following letter received from the Director, OIR bears directly on the above subject:

Dear Sherman,

At the IAC Meeting of August 2nd, Park suggested that the preparation of the annual NIE on Soviet Capabilities and Courses of Action could be greatly facilitated by planning for a much briefer estimate focused on Soviet courses of action and scheduling a series of more detailed NIE's on political, economical, scientific, and military topics. The IAC was sympathetic toward this proposal and agreed that the matter should be further explored by O/NE.

By way of providing a basis for further discussion, I would like to make the following specific proposals:

1. Next year's revision of NIE 11-4-56 should be made briefer by (1) confining the conclusions to probable courses of action and (2) condensing the discussion of Soviet capabilities to essentially the conclusions of the more detailed NIE's described below.

2. The detailed NIE's on various aspects of the USSR should be scheduled for regular revision once a year and the target dates should be set so that not more than one such estimate is underway at any single time. (See attached proposed schedule)

a. For the existing NIE's on science-technology, air defense, nuclear energy, and guided missiles, there would be no need to change their scope or schedule. Minor changes in target dates might be considered to avoid vacation difficulties during July and August and to provide for inevitable slippage at the end of the calendar year.

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DOCUMENT NO. 11

NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☒

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b. The present estimate on Gross Capabilities to Attack US could either be expanded to cover other relevant aspects of Soviet military capabilities, or supplemented by an estimate on Soviet military doctrine and strength.

c. Two new NIE's would be scheduled for the spring of each year -- one covering internal developments (political and economic), the other on Soviet foreign policy.

Needless to say, there are many other ways of slicing the large Soviet pie into digestible pieces. We think the proposed division is manageable and that the suggested schedule is likely to cause the minimum amount of difficulty. If you are in substantial agreement with our proposal, you might want to circulate it among the IAC agencies for consideration. It might also be desirable to have an IAC representatives meeting on the subject to work out further details; if so, I would suggest scheduling such a meeting shortly after Labor Day.

Sincerely yours,

25X1A

  
Director  
Office of Intelligence Research

Attachment:

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Proposed Schedule for Soviet NIE's  
1956-57

- September 1956: NIE 11-6-56, Capabilities and Trends of Soviet Science and Technology (Future revisions of this estimate would have the same scope, but would be scheduled for completion in October of each year.)  
(October 1957)
- October 1956: NIE 11-5-56, Soviet Capabilities and Programs in the Field of Guided Missiles. (Future revisions would have the same scope, but scheduled for November.)  
(November 1957)
- December 1956: NIE 11-X-56, Air Defense of the Sino-Soviet Bloc (Future revisions same scope as NIE 11-5-56.)
- February 1957: NIE 11-1-57, Soviet Military Capabilities (This estimate would replace the NIE on Gross Capabilities to Attack US by covering the subject matter needed by the NSC Net Evaluation Subcommittee, but treating three additional topics: (i) Soviet military doctrine, (ii) military strength as now covered in Section V and Appendix A of NIE 11-4-56, and (iii) general military capabilities as discussed in Section VI of NIE 11-4-56. The treatment of the latter topic might well be expanded.)
- March 1957: NIE 11-2-57, Soviet Nuclear Energy Program (Future revisions would have the same scope as NIE 11-2-56.)
- April 1957: NIE 11-3-57, Economic and Political Developments in the USSR (This would be a new NIE, but would correspond in scope to sections I and III of NIE 11-4-56.)
- May 1957: NIE 11-4-57, Trends and Prospects in Soviet Foreign Policy (This would also be a new NIE, but would cover essentially the same ground as Section II and parts of Sections VII and VIII in NIE 11-4-56.)
- June 1957: NIE 11-5-57, Probable Soviet Courses of Action over the next Five Years. (This would be the brief summary estimate which drew its discussion almost entirely from the conclusions of the preceding more detailed estimates.)

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